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Independent Technology Research (Class 4)

MATH 684

Personalized Learning

According to the United States Department of Education, personalized learning, “allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning.” Teachers meet students at the academic level they currently master. Teachers then move students through content so they won’t get “left behind” as many students tend to do in our “one size fits all” curriculum. Students also learn based on their learning preferences and interests. They take charge of their own learning. Some students may like to watch videos to learn about a concept, where others may enjoy reading or researching a topic. “These strategies include online and blended learning, dual enrollment and early college high schools, project-based and community-based learning, and credit recovery, among others” (Department of Education, 2014). Personalized learning is sometimes used interchangeably with student-centered learning. Examples of personalized learning options could include online or blended learning, and project based learning. A teacher can also guide students in a collaborative and interactive setting, therefore giving students opportunities for socialization to teach other students what they learned. Students also contribute to their learning, as opposed to just receiving information. Students also set their own personal goals which sometimes can exceed parent or school expectations. Some states and districts are already implementing the personalized learning option for many of their students. Examples are listed on the United States Department of Education’s website.

One of the main purposes or benefits to personalized learning is to prevent high school dropouts and tailor learning to the needs of each student. The student is engaged and actively involved in their learning, therefore more likely to be motivated in completing the class, or sometimes school altogether. Students can create their own personalized learning plan which gives them a guide to implement their goals. Personalized learning is more likely to be found in high school settings, since students have enough knowledge to learn concepts more independently then for example an early elementary child. The chance to succeed is the goal for personalized learning.

Personalized learning goes well with the concept of the 21st century learner. This includes technology which plays a major role in personalized learning. Many students will find resources on the internet to meet their needs and help them learn. Education is moving into the technological era which means personalized learning becomes somewhat easier for teachers to produce or suggest to students. There is virtually an unlimited amount of resources available for students to learn concepts.

I believe personalized learning is the future of education. So many times students are below grade level on some, if not most, skills they already should have mastered. I can name several current students I teach who cannot read. If those students were able to participate in personalized learning earlier in their educational life, maybe they wouldn’t be so behind.

No educator can argue with the great benefits for students of personalized learning. However, educators feel much pressure already to meet all students needs; how can they ensure students are on the right track and getting the correct information they need to learn the specific content in personalized learning? It sounds to me like a great deal of preparation and work even though students are to learn on their own, at their own pace, and using the resources they select. One of my biggest concerns would be students who are easily distracted by others, and spend their learning time socializing with peers on topics other than the skill assigned. There is also the flip side to that argument for students who are so caught up in their own learning, do not take the time to collaborate and socialize on the topic. Personalized learning seems as if it would bring out motivation within students to learn, but I don’t believe all students would be able to participate in personalized learning. I do believe that with the right guidance from the teacher on how to get started could benefit students greatly.

One of the sources cited explained that personalized learning saves time and money for schools. I would think for students gaining access to online material might cost more due to the need for a 1:1 device and internet resources that cost school systems money. This might save schools in the long run, but the cost upfront seems pricey. As for saving time, I’m not sure whose time they are speaking about. Yes a teacher wouldn’t have the need to create drawn out, extensive lesson plans for a whole group, but I think they would still need to research resources for students to complete their personalized learning. Some students would be great at finding resources to learn, and other students would have trouble therefore the teacher would need to step in to assist.

Another concern to mention would be the idea of students “learning at their own pace”. This is a cause for concern as we have students who are currently working with success on a 1st grade level for mathematics. Would this student take more time during the end of high school to get on grade level? What are the limitations of learning at their own pace? I think if personalized learning were to be set up in my school district, there would need to be a set of clear expectations and guidelines for students participating in personalized learning. Again I don’t believe it would work for every student, but maybe for highly motivated students.

All in all, personalized learning is a great concept that seems much more feasible to implement now more than ever. It will be interesting to see how school districts make the concept work and set limitations and expectations.

*Website Resources:*

<http://edglossary.org/personalized-learning/>

<http://www.ed.gov/oii-news/competency-based-learning-or-personalized-learning>

<http://education.vermont.gov/plp-working-group/main>

<http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs_redesign/index.htm>